



U.S. Small Business Administration

News

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

TowHaul Corporation, dba Smith Equipment of Belgrade Named SBA's National Small Business Exporter of the Year

HELENA, MT – TowHaul Corporation, dba Smith Equipment USA of Belgrade, has been named SBA's 2004 National Small Business Exporter of the Year and will be honored at national ceremonies in Orlando, FL on May 19, 2004. Tow Haul was selected as the Montana Small Business Exporter of the Year and was then submitted for Regional competition and outshined their competitors in Region VIII, which includes Colorado, Montana, North and South Dakota, Utah and Wyoming. They in turn went on to compete for national honors and beat out all other competition from across the country. TowHaul will be recognized as the Montana Small Business Exporter of the Year and the Region VIII Small Business Exporter of the Year at Montana's Annual Small Business Week Awards Luncheon at Missoula's Doubletree Inn on May 7, 2004.

TowHaul Corporation, dba Smith Equipment USA designs and manufactures custom, off-road trailers and other equipment for the mining industry. The company exports their product around the globe with over 80% of their income derived from outside the U.S. The company was founded by Frank V. Smith in 1977. In September 1997, Smith brought his step-daughter, Kim Wild, on board and coached her through a four year intensive hands-on training period to learn everything there was to know about the company. Smith promoted Wild to be the company's President and General Manager, allowing him to quietly retire from the daily functions of the business.

TowHaul started out with only a handful of employees, but has grown steadily since it added a marketing department in 1997. Since coming on board in 1997, Kim Wild has seen the number of employees rise from 10 to 26 in 2003 and sales have grown from \$1.4 million to \$3.4 million. Much of the increase in sales was due to the company's marketing efforts, engaging in exporting their products and opening new markets around the world. Today there are over 50 TowHaul units operating in 12 countries around the world.

TowHaul's success can be attributed largely to the niche they fill in the mining industry. There are only four or five other companies world-wide who would be considered competition for TowHaul, and none of them manufacture trailers in the 450 ton size. To date, TowHaul has designed and manufactured the largest capacity trailer in the world. It has a 550 ton carrying capacity, and is currently operating in the Freeport Gold Mine in Indonesia. In the past few years, the average trailer sold has shifted from a 250 ton capacity trailer to 450 ton capacity – leaving TowHaul in a class by itself, pretty much assuring the company's future success.

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TowHaul received the 2002 Governor's Excellence in Exporting – Exporter of the Year Award. Kim Wild is a member of the Montana District Export Council (MDEC) and is the chairman elect for 2004. Wild's involvement with the MDEC allows her to share the knowledge and expertise she has gained and she actively coaches other businesses in the process of exporting.

TowHaul Corporation, dba Smith Equipment USA was nominated by the Belgrade Chamber of Commerce, the Bozeman Area Chamber of Commerce and Career Transitions of Belgrade. Other award winners being honored include: William Woody of Nightingale Nursing Services, Inc. of Missoula – Montana Small Business Person of the Year; Jack Morgenstern of Century Companies, Inc. of Lewistown – First Runner-up Small Business Person of the Year; Jennifer Keck of Big Sky Travel Nurses, Inc. in Conrad – Woman owned Business of the Year; Frederick "Rick" Larson of Employee Benefit management Services, Inc. – Entrepreneurial Success Award; Ryan Deskins of R&R Pressure Washing of East Helena – SBA Young Entrepreneur of the Year; Mandi Luce-Heinle and Sarah Ann Hamlen of Innovative Marketing Solutions, LLC of Hathaway – Main Street Business of the Year; Jerry Sullivan of Flint Creek Valley Bank in Philipsburg – Financial Services Advocate of the Year; Sheryle Shandy of Billings Food Bank & Montana Harvest Kitchens/Montana Harvest Gift Boutique in Billings – Home-Based Business Advocate of the Year; Flathead Business Journal of Kalispell – Small Business Journalist of the Year; Craig Smith of the Fort Peck Community College in Poplar – Minority Small Business Advocate of the Year; Joe Fletcher of the Great Falls Job Service Workforce Center – Veteran Small Business Advocate of the Year; and Joy Ott of Wells Fargo Bank Montana, N.A. in Billings – Women in Business Advocate of the Year.

For more information on SBA programs and services, contact the Montana SBA District office at (406) 441-1081 or log onto www.sba.gov/mt.

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